

Ministry of Information building, the Fedeyeen Headquarters, Uday Hussein's Headquarters, and the Ministry of Oil building. After the battalion crossed the LD, it engaged a charging vehicle, destroying the vehicle and killing its two occupants. By 0930Z, they had secured the Fedeyeen compound. Elements of the battalion also engaged suspected Fedeyeen who fired on them from the tenth floor of the Ministry of Information building. Two TOW missiles silenced the enemy weapons. Fedeyeen sniping continued against all elements of the Battalion, including the Alpha and Bravo command groups, the 81mm mortar platoon, and the logistics train. Under the direction of the battalion Executive Officer, Major Anthony Henderson, elements of the battalion returned fire, killing a number of enemy fighters. Kilo Company attacked to clear the Ministry of Information, a twelve-story tower. One platoon secured the perimeter while two platoons alternated clearing floors. The training the Marines had received in urban warfare paid off in confidence and flawless execution. Lance Corporal Mark Enos remembers:

*The thing that impacted me the most was when we began to clear the twelve-story building. Knowing in the back of my mind that there was a really big possibility that there was enemy in the buildings, we used our MOUT tactics and depended on one another for our own safety. Our squad leader knew exactly what to do and what had to be done.*

The RCT-7 TAC moved in on the heels of 3/7 and set-up just below the Ministry of Information building, while the building was still being cleared. A firefight raged in front as 3/7 security elements blocked the entrances to the compound.

Lima Company, 3/7, attacked to seize the Ministry of Oil building after finding that its first two targets already burning.



*Iraqi children welcome the Marines with shouts and waves.*

Uday Hussein's office on the top floor of a nearby building was engulfed in flames, likely started by irate civilians seeking revenge on the Regime after years of brutal repression. The building burned for several days. One platoon secured the sprawling Oil Ministry structure, while the remaining two platoons cleared two floors at a time. By 1410Z both the Ministries of Information and Oil were secured. Companies begin to back-clear the buildings top to bottom.

Late that afternoon 3/7 also engaged two enemy "technicals" and one civilian vehicle that attempted to drive through a checkpoint. All three vehicles were destroyed. While the enemy soldiers were all killed, the Marines managed to pull two civilians from their car and affect an immediate CASEVAC. Shortly afterward, two Marines were injured when an Iraqi POV filled

with gasoline drums attempted to ram a Marine vehicle. Fortunately, the gasoline did not ignite. These last acts of resistance, however, were overshadowed by the swell of popular support received by the Marines. Everywhere they went, the Marines continued to be bombarded with waves, shouts, and kisses. No Marine went through that 'fire' without being effected.

As RCT-7 pushed into southeast Baghdad from the Southeast, RCT-1 operated on their right flank, to the northeast of the Army Canal. Inchon had pushed past Phase Line Andrew at Highway 5 the previous day, and was at the edge of the government center and the outskirts of Saddam City. They faced light resistance all morning, as 1/4 and 2/23 commenced the attack into the RCT's portion of Baghdad.



*The DGS Headquarters received a cruise missile on the first night of the war. This facility would soon house the Division Headquarters.*

Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Cooper's 2/23 pushed forward through the center of the zone, looking for the headquarters of the Iraqi Directorate for General Security. While pushing toward the suspected location, the RCT's Alpha command group found the headquarters thanks to its Iraqi defenders. The otherwise non-descript government buildings were not at the location described on the map, but were readily identified when the Alpha command began to take intense enemy fire from their vicinity. Fox Company, 2/23, led by Major Jonathan E. Kirkpatrick, attacked in order to clear the high-walled compound that housed approximately 100

defenders. The defense increased in intensity upon the Company's approach, and Highway 5 soon was a maelstrom of RPG, sniper, and machinegun fire.

Civilian vehicles loaded with armed men in civilian attire began assailing Fox Company's lines. One such vehicle came barreling into the position drawing fire from all friendly positions. The vehicle came to a halt at Sergeant Scott Montoya's position on the firing line. Sergeant Montoya saw that the enemy driver was reaching under the seat (for what was later found to be hidden explosives.) Sergeant Montoya dashed out into the street under fire and eliminated the threat. From his vantage point in the street, Sergeant Montoya saw Lance Corporal Segovia, a rifleman from 3<sup>d</sup> platoon, lying in the open on Highway 5 and bleeding profusely from the inner thigh. Rushing to the Marine's side under the crossfire of friendly and enemy bullets, Sergeant Montoya stripped the Marine of his gear, hoisted him upon his shoulders, and carried him 500 meters to safety. As the engagement continued, Sergeant Montoya repeatedly left the relative safety of his covered position to assist three more wounded Marines and an Iraqi civilian to a casualty collection point.

Second Platoon received a barrage of hostile fire including rockets, machineguns, and small arms the preponderance of which was directed at Corporal Robert Tomczak's machinegun team. Realizing that his position was critical to the platoon's security, Corporal Tomczak remained in place and countered the heavy volume of fire with his own highly accurate and effective fire,

disrupting an attempted flank assault. Under the barrage of fire, Corporal Tomczak maneuvered from his sand bag fortifications and deployed an AT-4 to silence an RPG position. When an armed gunman in a vehicle attempted to ram his position, Corporal Tomczak steadily returned fire, dodging the closing vehicle by inches as it crossed the curb and impacted his bunker.

During the height of the battle, several civilian vehicles were caught in the deadly crossfire between the Marines and the enemy positions. Observing several wounded civilians in disabled vehicles, Chief Warrant Officer Frank Castiglia organized a squad size element to rescue the wounded. During a lull in the engagement, he led the rescue team from covered positions into the exposed intersection to bring the civilians into friendly lines. They came under intense machinegun and rocket propelled grenade fire. Chief Warrant Officer Castiglia advanced his Marines under the suppressive fires of the company, and recovered a wounded Iraqi civilian. During the engagement, nine Marines were wounded. The DGS compound had been the primary facility for Saddam Hussein's secret internal police. The records captured inside this facility were a significant intelligence find and would help document the crimes Saddam had committed against his own people.

First Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines, attacked in zone, clearing the northern sector up to the immediate outskirts of Saddam City. Enemy contact was sporadic and light. Those who chose to stay, put up minimal resistance and were quickly overwhelmed by the assault units. Killing several enemy fighters and capturing over 25 EPWs, 1/4 secured all objectives, to include the most dominant building in its sector, a cigarette factory. The battalion established its CP in this building, and employed scout snipers and a Naval Special Warfare (NSW) counter-sniper team with a commanding view from the roof. Responding to indications that there had been



*Marines from RCT-1 apprehend an Iraqi man who stole a UN vehicle.*

significant rioting in the streets of Saddam City, RCT-1 also tasked 1/4 to enter this vast Shia neighborhood to restore order. The surveillance platforms that detected the rioting could not ascertain whether the mobs of civilians on the streets were celebrating, looting, or exacting revenge on those who had cooperated with the Regime before. Moving into this Shia hotbed, 1/4 was unsure if they would be welcomed or taken under fire. The Marines' dominance of the zone was made clear to the inhabitants by a program of saturation patrolling; swarming the streets for short intervals, then moving to another area to repeat the process. On their first combat patrol into the city, thousands of well-wishers greeted the Marines with flowers and cheers of joy.

Showing that they were 'No better friend' to the Iraqi people, RCT-1 provided assistance and support to an International Committee of the Red Cross hospital site in their zone. With all of the destruction and misery in the city, it was important to get as many hospitals functioning as

quickly as possible. At the Red Cross hospital, there had been a significant threat from looters. This threatened the patients currently in the hospitals, as well as the ability of the Iraqis to restore medical services to the population. Leaving the facility unsecured was not an option for the Marines, and they took action:

*“On 10 April, the ‘Jump’ CP of 3<sup>d</sup> Assault Amphibian Battalion was coordinating with 1st Marines, when the battalion civil affairs officer, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Van Nordhiem asked to drive by the HQs for the International Committee of the Red Cross. They found the location and had a great, very informative meeting with the ICRC director. The director's greatest concern was the safety of the Medical City complex. With the collapse of organized resistance, looters and Iraqi Fedeyeen fighters were threatening to destroy the facility. The greatest concern was all the hundreds of patients on life support throughout the three hospitals. If power was lost, or equipment was not safeguarded, those Iraqis would die. Lieutenant Colonel Abbott and his interpreter, Sergeant Danny Hamler found and met with one of the Iraqi doctors, a Dr Ali and explained that the Marines were coming to protect the hospital complex. The doctor was visibly shaking with fear and was absolutely convinced that we were going to murder the patients in their beds. That's what the government had told them. After nearly hyperventilating and chain smoking an entire pack of cigarettes, he calmed down and explained that the looters had gotten away with ambulances and some medical equipment. The appearance of the Marines had frightened away the boldest looters, but they would be back.*

*The Jump CP only consisted of two soft skinned HMMWVs and eight Marines with no heavy weapons. As the security force had not arrived yet, the Jump Marines began aggressively patrolling the complex to give the appearance of a much larger force. Amongst the tall hospital buildings, external communications were limited to chance, as one in forty tries to get through on an Iridium phone. As the sun went down and there was still no infantry, the desperately exposed nature of the situation became quite apparent to everyone. Backlit by burning cars, shadowed figures moved along the perimeter. Medical City was on a bluff looking west across the Tigris River. The Marines watched as the 3<sup>d</sup> ID battled Iraqi forces on the west side with*

*tracers, explosions and fireballs arching through the night. Around 2300, another Iraqi doctor came by and announced that more Americans had arrived at one of the hospitals. The AAV Marines linked up with the task-organized platoon of tanks, AAVs and mechanized infantry from 3<sup>d</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines. Lieutenant Colonel Abbott, Sergeant Hamler and Doctor Ali led the infantry team leader, First Lieutenant David M. Bann of 2<sup>d</sup> platoon, India Company, 3/4 on the recon of Medical City in order to rapidly effect the*



*Marines patrol the narrow streets of Saddam City.*

*relief in place. It was surreal as the small group walked the perimeter, discussing security priorities while the battle went on around them. 3/4 remained in place and continued to safeguard the complex. The next day, we heard on the short wave radio how the military was supposedly negligent for not protecting hospitals, but we knew there were at least three large hospitals where Marines had risked their lives to protect innocent Iraqi civilians."*

The Sailors and Marines of all of the RCTs helped to the extent they were able, with supplies, security, and even medical help. Where medical supplies stored by the former Regime could be located, they were distributed to the civilian hospitals. Until widespread medical aid could be flown in, however, the few operating medical facilities did the best they could under difficult circumstances.

During one of their patrols, RCT-1 discovered a food storage warehouse, and set up a food distribution site to get it to those who needed it the most. The food distribution operation aired as a story on CBS news. RCT-1's actions this day continued in the fashion of the 'Three Block War'. While 2/23 was engaged in an intense MOUT fight, other Marines of the RCT were deterring looters, while yet a third group were handing out food and supporting the local hospital.



*Marines assist in humanitarian missions from the moment they arrive.*

The experience of RCT-1 this day and others also served as a visible demonstration of the balanced and flexible capability of the Marine Air Ground Task Force. Since crossing the LD, nearly every function of the MAGTF had been committed to the fight, and every one had proved itself indispensable at one point or another. Balance in capability is what brought the Division success. All capabilities were used in concert, but each, in turn, came to the fore. Engaging in the Three Block War required large numbers of trained infantrymen. The tanks and artillery that had been central to victory on the southern desert ceded their dominant position to dismounted riflemen in the urban area. Aviation, which had been critical to the shaping effort, had ceded their precedence to tanks on the ground near Al Basrah. Tanks had been supplanted as the most critical capability by engineers building and improving key bridges in An Nasiriyah. The engineers had enabled the LAVs to conduct a rapid advance along a route of unknown quality until the enemy's strength was located. The LAVs stepped aside as mechanized infantry pushed through the enemy's defenses. Artillery covered fire support tasks as fierce sandstorms grounded aviation fires. Logistics brought by KC-130 and new MTRV trucks enabled expeditionary logistics to fill-in for a slower-moving logistics support system. Modern communications equipment had enabled a swift command and control capability that allowed rapid tempo throughout, without requiring an operational pause while waiting for the

headquarters to catch-up. Even with all of these technological capabilities, however, the primary weapon for the fight for Baghdad, stabilization operations and civil military interaction, was the Marine Corps' most basic core competency, the individual US Marine.

### **Recon's Security Zone Operations in Baqubah**

On the morning of 9 April, while the Division was conducting its attacks into the heart of Eastern Baghdad, Recon Battalion continued its attack to Baqubah back on the east side of the Diyala River north of Baghdad. Captain Gil Juarez's Charlie Company, 1<sup>st</sup> LAR was able to push forward through the (now abandoned) positions that Lieutenant McCabe's platoon had attacked the previous evening, and proceeded up the road. Charlie Company again moved north along the road to Baqubah. The earlier positions had been abandoned, but the Recon Marines were on the hunt and the enemy was soon located a short distance up the road.



*Saddam's forces are unable to hide from US artillery and air fires.*

As the battalion continued north, Iraqi civilians informed them of a company-size enemy force set in another ambush in tall grass just ahead. The battalion attacked to this area and once again mortar fire erupted just off the road. At the same time, the Marines began receiving direct fire from uniformed Republican Guard forces who were firing from both sides of the road and from nearby buildings. LAR's White platoon returned fire with their 25mm

cannon and mounted M240G machine guns, engaging the enemy sometimes as close as 10 meters away. The LAV-AT s launched several missiles into the nearby houses where the most concentrated fires were coming from.

The company's FiST went into action, led by the FAC, Captain William "Chocka" Bartolomea. The team dismounted their LAV under fire and obtained a 10-digit grid utilizing the LASER Viper. The team returned to their LAV and called in a JDAM strike and then finished the enemy strongpoint off with Hellfire missiles from AH-1 Cobra gunships. As Charlie LAR, Bravo Recon, and Delta Recon Companies continued to push up the main road, Alpha Recon and Charlie Recon companies pushed up a flanking route to the east. While Captain Brian Gilman's Charlie Company protected the east flank of the movement, Major Brian Patterson (he had been promoted since the Al Gharraf fight) led his Alpha Company to a berm just to the north of the enemy defenders. As the flanking force got into place, and more Cobras appeared overhead, the enemy decided he had had enough. Uniformed enemy soldiers disappeared into culverts and buildings, 'miraculously' reappearing as unarmed young men in

civilian clothes mixed with local civilians. This was the same tactic used by Fedeyeen in Ad Diwaniyah days before. As Captain Gilman describes it, "Whenever rotary wing air showed up these guys would just bug out. It was one of the most frustrating experiences I've ever had watching these guys walk away, but they'd disappear and suddenly reappear with no weapons, wearing civilian clothes. It was tough, but the Marines showed incredible restraint. We didn't want more civilians getting killed." The Recon Marines' discipline was sufficient to prevent

*On 9 April, one of the strangest things I saw during the war occurred. We were ambushed at the same spot as the night before, and were called to a halt. I was the lead vehicle at the time. As mortar rounds impacted all around us, I saw a family of one mother, a daughter, and two men in their late teens walk right by my vehicle straight towards the enemy positions. My platoon began firing on troops in the open, enemy vehicles, and emplacements to our north on the right side of the road. As the 25 mm fire flew over the family's heads, they just continued walking as if impervious to all that was occurring around them. The enemy mortars continued to fall all around the family and my platoon continued to shoot over the top of them. They only broke stride once to move to the other side of the road because the fire obviously was too intense to stay on the side they were walking. I curiously watched them walk all the way to the enemy positions and out of view. They must have been the luckiest Iraqis I've ever seen. Or maybe they got killed once they were near the enemy positions where all the impacts were landing. I'll never know.*

harm to the innocent by not continuing to engage even when they had good reason to believe that enemy troops were in civilian disguise amongst the locals.

Alpha Company Recon arrived at the berm and observed a BMP firing at them from the other side. The Marines were able to get a section of F-15s and had them drop two JDAMs on the target. The first landed only 300 meters from the Marines' position (due to a weapons malfunction) but the second obliterated the BMP. The attack continued. The Reconnaissance Battalion destroyed a total of 3 BMPs and 2 abandoned T-72s as they continued to advance to the east of Baqubah.

As the last resistance between the advancing reconnaissance force and the city fell, the Recon Battalion commander called back to the Division CP over the secure Iridium phone. Over the phone, the Division G-2 and the Recon Battalion Commander were able to react to the changing situation on the ground. The G-2 recommended direct observation of the garrison of the Al Nida Division headquarters, and the headquarters of the 41<sup>st</sup> Brigade. Charlie Company Recon conducted a daring daylight operation into both of these facilities, confirming the enemy had abandoned them. Charlie Company cleared both the Division and Brigade Headquarters while the remainder of the force conducted roadblocks along Highway 5. As no further enemy resistance or forces were identified, the battalion returned to Baghdad and was integrated into the Division's operations there.

## 10 April On to the Next Fight

In Baghdad, the Division continued its attacks into the eastern half of the city. The list of Regime targets was slowly whittled down as the day proceeded. All four regiments were able to conduct a physical linkup at the edges of their zones, and the enemy resistance existed only in pockets around the city. With the Division in a 35 km cordon around the city, the Division Main CP found itself out of position to adequately communicate with its widely spaced elements. The Main CP moved to a site farther north along the Diyala from which it could better communicate with the widely dispersed elements of the Division. The site, between the banks of the Tigris and the Dead General Crossroads, was certainly better than the rendering field they had been in previously. The Division Forward CP in the Fedeyeen Stadium briefly took control, while the Marines of the Division Main conducted the teardown and displaced away from the animal bones, hair, and teeth in record time.

The Division had marked every mission success with a new assignment, and the securing of eastern Baghdad was no exception. As quickly as it began to position itself for successful completion of combat tasks in eastern Baghdad, the Division was tasked to plan a mission for securing the oilfields in Kirkuk, 200 km to the north. These key oilfields of the north, which contributed approximately one-third of Iraq's oil production, originally fell into the battlespace of US forces attacking from the



*The Division Forward CP at Rasheed Fedeyeen Stadium. This was some of the first green grass the Marines had seen since leaving the US.*

north. Because the Coalition's northern option had been greatly reduced by Turkey's reluctance to support the war effort, US forces had not yet secured these fields. Blue Diamond had already secured almost two-thirds of Iraq's oil production capability during the Opening Gambit in the south, and was now given a warning order to attack to secure another third.

The town of Kirkuk was not only a considerable distance away, but also was defended by at least a brigade of RG and elements of three Iraqi RA Divisions. Given the Division's recent experience, it was known that the enemy's strength on the ground was probably significantly lower than the strict order of battle published on paper. The planners agreed it was an acceptable risk to send a light force to attack this remaining threat, and the Division immediately turned to the task. As the warning order contained no supporting intelligence, the Division scrambled to assemble a study of the enemy, routes, objectives, and oilfield infrastructure to support the

attack. Obtaining maps for an objective this far away was an immediate challenge. The G-2 planners quickly designed and began to print specialized maps using its organic Topographic capability, and dispatched an officer to Kuwait to quickly obtain standard maps from the MLC. The Division expected to have about 48 hours to prepare before having to cross the LD. Undeterred by the challenges, the Division began to assemble a light task force that could rapidly close the distance to Kirkuk, would have enough combat power when it got there, would communicate by satellite, and could be re-supplied by air. The Division's infantry battalions were largely consumed in seizing and controlling the major eastern Baghdad metropolitan area, with its several million inhabitants. Balancing the various Division missions and the forces available, Warning Orders went out to the three LAR Battalions as the principal units that would make up the task force, and Brigadier General John Kelly was assigned to command what would be a de-facto Light Armored Reconnaissance Regiment (Reinforced). Even as much remained to be done in Baghdad, the Division planners rapidly began to look to Kirkuk.

### **Downtown Objectives**

Saddam City was made up almost exclusively of poverty stricken Shia Muslims and had been a hot bed of anti-Saddam fervor. It was key for the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division to provide a presence not only to show Iraqi support for the Coalition forces but also to mitigate the looting that was rampant in the city. RCT-1 planned to form zones by splitting Saddam City in half. The urban area was split between 1/4 and 3/1, and each occupied its respective zone. The attack met little resistance and the Shia populace was extremely happy to see the Marines. They openly waved and cheered the Marines during patrols that were conducted throughout the city. People lined the streets to see their liberators first-hand. The sound of gunfire was replaced by the same repeated phrases offered by the young and old alike, "Good, mister, good," and "Bush good; Saddam donkey."

Later that day, RCT-1 conducted an attack to the north side of Saddam City in response to enemy indirect fires received earlier and located by 11<sup>th</sup> Marine's counter-battery radar. The local population was found to be very supportive and aided in uncovering weapons caches and identifying locations of the last holdouts among the Regime forces. The Shia populace had no love for Saddam and the Baathist thugs who had terrorized them for so long. This was especially evident during one of 1/4's counter-mortar patrols in Saddam City. After uncovering and disposing numerous weapons caches, the rifle companies were ordered back to their outposts. As the forward command group turned a corner,



**Above and Below: *Ammo caches in Baghdad***





*The Division Main CP operates in the abandoned DGS facility in Baghdad.*

a group of Iraqis began to gesture and point down the street, tipping off a potential enemy ambush. Gunner frame Parks sprung from his vehicle and began to fire-on the would-be assailants. The enemy returned fire, broke contact, and ran down an alley. The assailants ducked into a house and locked the door behind them. The Gunner attached a grenade to the doorknob and forced an entry into the building with Lieutenant Colonel Mayer and Private First Class Cobb following close behind. They were greeted by the screams of women and children who were being used as shields to hide the assailants, who were captured without firing a shot.

During multiple counter-mortar patrols, RCT-1 uncovered four FROG missiles, and a number of other strategic missiles and weapons caches. Because of the on-going search for chemical and biological weapons, one of the missile systems was tested for the presence of WMD agents. RCT-1 also found what appeared to be a mobile, chemical weapons lab. The RCT called in an exploitation team to have it tested. The tests came out negative, but the RCT and all Division elements remained vigilant in their search for evidence of WMD. The ubiquity of weapons caches showed that the Iraqi Regime had prepared to fight for the city block by block. It was obvious that the battle for the city could have been a lot worse if the Iraqi Army had chosen to stay and fight or the Iraqi people had fought against their liberators. The rapidity and violence of the Division attack on the city, coupled with the firepower brought to bear by 3<sup>d</sup> MAW and 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, had crushed the enemy's ability to resist. The seeds of popular uprising against the Americans had been crushed by the Regime itself during their years of brutal repression of the Iraqi people. The recently liberated Iraqis were not eager to fight to regain their shackles.



*Marines stop weapons smugglers at checkpoints throughout the city.*

After the operations that morning, RCT-1 controlled an area from the Diyala River through Saddam City. RCT-5 controlled the area from northwest of Saddam City to central Baghdad north of the Tigris. RCT-7 controlled the downtown area along the Tigris in central Baghdad. The Cannon Cockers controlled the Rasheed complex and all of the surrounding neighborhoods.